Exempt Staff Fall Forum Minutes  
Wednesday, September 22, 2010  
11:30-1:00, MHC 304 and TMH 252

Members present: Linda Dorn, John Barron, Margaret Cahill, Liz Dussol, Nate Rolloff, Kim Schumann, Sandy Schwartz, Jerry Sweeney, Kay Wimer, Tony Lewno

Absent:

Linda welcomed Edna to the podium after a brief overview of today’s agenda.

Edna started by mentioning the Fringe Benefits Advisory Committee and that many benefit decisions go through this group, she will talk about that further later. She then dove into the UST Compensation and Benefit Philosophy in a holistic way. If you talk about benefits you must also consider salary, this is part of Total Compensation. At the HR Fair each year we get a personalized statement that has each person’s total compensation including all aspects of pay and benefits in a monetary fashion. Every university has a benefits and compensation philosophy. It’s needed to evaluate cost at a university. Think of your own personal budget and relate that to a university. Say you have a mortgage that is a fixed monthly cost, the university has similar expenses. If 70% of budget is on that mortgage it only leaves 30% for other stuff, if 70% goes to university expenditures, only 30 % left for salaries and similar expenses. So UST has to be creative with their solutions.

Access, Excellence and Catholic Identity are what the university needs to fulfill. UST looks at equity both internal and external. We benchmark against other higher educational places but also use multiple data sets to ensure they are accurate and within range. UST used to have many ranges but it was difficult and complex to always update that so we went to broad banding. Individuals jobs are compared to comparable positions. The job is rated to the job responsibilities, not what the individuals talents and experience are. We strive to attract and retain a high caliber diverse workforce. We try to be competitive with salaries, maybe not leading, but not lagging either, we want to be competitive overall. We strive to provide a benefits program that is administered consistently and reflects the belief that the institution and its employees share responsibilities.

Questions are asked of HR by people who think they are paid too low and others paid too high. Compensation management is a tough job, the market is ever changing, it needs constant attention and there are employees in HR that have the task of monitoring that. We check with the 5 ACTC schools and MPCC (17 privates), as well as other local surveys and national surveys (CUPA for example). Some jobs are recruited nationally and some locally. You price jobs according to how you recruit. If a job is recruited locally, it is benched locally. ERI is also benchmarked against for compensation. Benefits are also benched in a similar fashion. Some are benched locally while others are benched nationally. TIAA-CREF and Fidelity are national. Some things are benched against The Sacred Eight, while others are not.

The pension plan is a big point of discussion as well. Some of the Sacred Eight pay as high as 9% as well, however, they also require an employee contribution where UST does not.
How are decisions made? The culture here is very collaborative. FBAC, AAAC (Academic and Administrative Advisory Committee [which is the AAL reincarnated and report to Sue Huber or Mark Dienhart]), and President’s Staff are all involved. FBAC is a mixed group including Faculty, Non-Exempt, and Exempt staff representation.

The absence of certain benefits: Some want more. Why does UST not provide for: Vacation carry over, or staff sabbaticals. Edna’s recommendation has been to not go down these paths for UST, it’s not in our best interest. We benchmark these and many of our peers are not doing these things. UST currently has a generous employee leave program. Many employees who leave come back to UST. There is also significant burden to administer these programs.

UST is the only institution that offers paid Emergency Family Leave in addition to PLT or vacation. Non Exempt can accrue 4.6 weeks, Exempt get 4 weeks immediately. Many universities providing a vacation donation program DO NOT offer Emergency Family Leave. We need to make sure we are comparing apples to apples when looking at other schools. We get 4 weeks vacation, 13 holidays, up to 2 wks Family Emergency Leave, up to 24 weeks pad STD, up to 16 hrs School Conf Leave, recently have been receiving extra paid holiday days.

Lack of departmental funding for professional development is another topic raised. We do currently have Leadership Academy, Tuition Remission, and OCB Center for Business Excellence. Different departments do have different flexibility. Senior leaders gave no resistance when the Leadership Academy was born, which was designed to provide professional development. Staff Mentorship has also been added as a learning opportunity and is now in its third or fourth year.

HR is still in the process of evaluating health care options for the upcoming year. We were considering a new carrier but will not be going that route. Currently UST has a benefits cost of about 12 million dollars a year, and it has been soaring. UST made some plan changes to avoid a 19% cost increase this past year. BCBS has a different program we are looking at, GENRX, which can lower costs but employees could keep their current doctors. Medica or Health Partners would in many cases require employees to switch doctors. The labor market this year is moving 2.5% so we need to find ways to increase salaries to go along with that.

What is your employer’s responsibility? What is our responsibility as employees?

How does UST rank nationally in US News but are benched locally. Edna feels that UST as a whole is not striving for a national ranking but certain schools/colleges within UST are striving for national ranking, but overall as Fr. Dease has said, we are a regional school. We don’t recruit many positions nationally, we recruit them locally, just as almost all employers would. (think of Admin Asst positions, carpenters, DBA’s)
Pay equity question regarding staff and male/female differences: We have not done review for adverse impact which can be very costly and time consuming. We have done evaluating though overall of positions and over gender. It’s the job classification that we look at.

Question posed: Gifting of vacation time at previous institutions, with not having to change their lifestyles: In many cases though by the time they hit STD they would be in economic hardship. STD here is for 6 months, paid, which is a lot. After that they can petition for 2 more weeks, vacation can be used as well, then they can use LTD. LTD is until retirement or until recovered.

Comment on employers responsibility, one of them is to help keep us informed. It’s helpful as individuals make decisions regarding their benefits. UST is in the process of hiring a new Comp and Benefits Manager hopefully someone will be on board Nov 1st. There’s a benefits newsletter released quarterly and perhaps more information can be added to that.

We are all working toward the mission. Is tuition remission on the table for changing as we look at cutting costs? Edna said it will not change, other than new employees having to wait 1 year for tuition remission.

With the open positions from early retirement, when will we know when/if positions will actually be filled? There a lot of decisions made in a decentralized manner and this is one of them. While we are in difficult times, Edna has advised dept heads to look at current staffing levels. If you have had 25 employees in the past, it doesn’t mean you still need 25 employees, make sure that is evaluated. These monies can be used to bring salaries closer to market. There needs to be a strategic way to reorganize and get the work done. Every department needs to find a way to meet their target budget, whether comp or non-comp.

Linda thanked the group for coming and notified of the upcoming forums, both All staff and Exempt. Information will be coming out about that. There will also be brown bag sessions coming up on a variety of topics.

Meeting adjourned

Future Agenda Items:

Next Meeting:  
Respectfully submitted,  
Nate Rolloff